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Pakistan joins Arab bloc to challenge US Gaza mission scope

Insists any such resolution must affirm 'political horizon' for Palestinian self-determination, statehood

By Anwar Iqbal

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has aligned itself with the Arab group at the United Nations in calling for greater clarity on the US-proposed Gaza Stabilisation Force, insisting that any Security Council resolution must also define the "political horizon," senior UN diplomats told *Dawn*.

"Pakistan supports the Arab position that the resolution must reaffirm the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, prevent further annexation, and ensure that Gaza and the West Bank remain a single entity within an independent Palestinian state," a diplomatic source said.

Pakistan's move came after China and Russia, both permanent veto-wielding members of the 15-member Council, broke the "silence period", a procedural pause for reviewing the revised US draft.

They questioned the absence of a clear mandate for the proposed two-year International Stabilisation Force (ISF) and demanded that it operate under direct UN Security Council oversight. They also sought more details about the proposed Board of Peace (BOP).

"They want the Security Council to supervise the ISF and set its limits," a UN official familiar with the discussions said. "China and Russia's message was that no peacekeeping or stabilisation force should function outside the UN framework."

The first draft of the US resolution, known as Revision 1, incorporates the full "20-point" Trump peace plan and envisions a Board of Peace (BOP), which President Donald Trump is expected to head, to oversee reconstruction and disarmament.

However, the proposal faces widespread resistance. The United Arab Emirates has cited unresolved legal concerns, Jordan has declined to send troops, and Azerbaijan has linked its involvement to a verified ceasefire. At Israel's insistence, Turkey has been excluded.

Even among nations open to participating, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, there is unease. One diplomat said these states "do not want to be seen as a joint B-team of the Israeli military focused solely on disarming Hamas".

Israel has also expressed frustration, saying its role has been reduced to logistics and aid coordination rather than full involvement in planning the force.

The World Bank, however, has endorsed the US draft. In a letter to Washington, Bank President Ajay Banga confirmed support for the BOP's two-year mandate and a readiness to manage reconstruction funds for Gaza, with rebuilding costs estimated at about $70 billion.

Concerns also persist within Washington. Documents obtained by Politico from a US-sponsored symposium in southern Israel last month showed that officials and experts raised doubts about the feasibility of deploying the force, citing challenges in securing troop commitments and ensuring regional buy-in.

A US defence official told *Politico* the materials "reflect the administration's close-held concerns" about the plan's viability.

But State Department spokesperson Eddie Vasquez dismissed the worries, saying, "Everyone wants to be part of President Trump's historic Middle East peace effort."

Diplomats in New York said Washington will now prepare a second revised draft before tabling the resolution for a vote, which is likely to happen next week.

"The US remains determined," one diplomat noted. "But the divisions in the Council — and the deeper political questions — mean this will take longer than Washington expected."

All the countries participating in this debate shared their positions while offering written comments on the US draft.

Another plea filed against 27th Amendment

By Wajih Ahmed Sheikh

LAHORE: Another petition challenging the 27th Amendment was filed in the Lahore High Court on Wednesday, a day after a similar plea was submitted to the Supreme Court.

The petitioner, Hassan Latif, contended through his counsel that changes were being introduced through the 27th Amendment that contradicted the preamble of the Constitution and attempted to curtail the powers of the Supreme Court.

He argued that by reducing judicial authority, the amendment endangered judicial independence and undermined the constitutional framework, as it was being passed without consultation with the provinces.

He said the amendment sought to restructure the apex judiciary of Pakistan by creating a Federal Constitutional Court (FCC).

He added that the Supreme Court's original, appellate, and advisory jurisdictions were being transferring to the FCC.

He further contended that the proposed amendment had been passed by the Senate, tabled in the National Assembly and was yet to be assented by the president.

Therefore, the petitioner asked the court to annul the 27th Amendment and declare the transfer of constitutional cases to another court as void.

On Tuesday, former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Jawwad S. Khawaja challenged the 27th Amendment, seeking a directive that the SC retain exclusive jurisdiction to determine the lawfulness and constitutionality of the amendment.

Filed through Advocate Khwaja Ahmad Hosain, the petitioner urged the apex court to strike down or suspend any provisions in any Act of Parliament, including the 27th Amendment, that reduce or abolish the constitutional jurisdiction of the SC, or that purport to vest such jurisdiction in any other court or body.

The petition also asked the apex court to set aside the provisions of the 27th Amendment related to the transfer of high court judges and requested that the matter be treated as one of "urgency" until a final decision on the plea was reached.

The former CJP explained that he had filed the petition to save the SC that he claimed was on the verge of being abolished as a constitutional court.

He argued that he had "no personal interest" in this case, adding the relief sought was for the benefit of all citizens of Pakistan.

Iraq's premier claims victory of his coalition in polls

Sudani faces challenge of maintaining delicate balance between country's allies Iran and US

BAGHDAD: Incumbent Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani claimed victory for his coalition on Wednesday in Iraq's general election after preliminary results showed it had secured a decisive lead.

Supporters of Sudani, who is vying for a second term, flocked late in the evening to Tahrir Square to celebrate with fireworks, according to AFP correspondents.

Casting the victory as one for all Iraqis in a televised speech, Sudani congratulated the country 'on your coalition winning first place' in the parliamentary elections. "Our coalition, 'Reconstruction and Development', is first," Sudani said separately on X, expressing "deep gratitude to the Iraqi people for their support".

Iraqis went to the polls on Tuesday for a general election that came as the country experienced a rare moment of calm in a region roiled by recent conflicts.

IRAQI Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani shows his ink-stained thumb after voting at a polling station.—Reuters

The next premier must answer to Iraqis seeking jobs, better infrastructure, and improved education and health systems in a country plagued by corruption and mismanagement.

But he also faces the unenviable task of maintaining the delicate balance between Iraq's allies — arch foes Iran and the United States — made all the more delicate by recent seismic changes in the Middle East.

Iraq's electoral commission announced preliminary results on Wednesday evening showing Sudani's candidate list in the lead with more than 1.3 million votes — about 370,000 more than the next closest competitor.

The commission said that more than 12 million people took part out of 21 million eligible voters, despite influential Moqtada Sadr calling on his supporters to boycott the poll.

While vote counts for each list by province were released, seat allocations in parliament will not be announced until later.

An official close to Sudani had told AFP before the count was announced that his list was sailing to "a major victory".

Another two sources estimated Sudani's alliance had won the largest bloc, estimating it would take approximately 50 seats out of a total of 329.

Once final results are confirmed, lawmakers are set to begin negotiations to nominate the prime minister — an often painstaking task that has at times taken months.

With an outright majority almost impossible to achieve by any single list, who gets the role is determined by whatever coalition can secure enough post-election partnerships to form the largest alliance.

In Iraq, the prime ministership goes to the Shia majority, the speaker of parliament to a Sunni, and the largely ceremonial presidency goes to a Kurd.

In previous parliaments, Shia-majority parties have struck compromise deals to work together and form a government. Sudani emerged as a major force in Iraqi politics after he was brought to power three years ago by the Coordination Framework, an alliance of powerful pro-Iran parties who formed the largest parliamentary bloc.—AFP

Internet, mobile data services suspended in Balochistan

Transport ban imposed on Loralai section of N-70 for security concerns

By Saleem Shahid and Muhammad Akbar Notezai

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has suspended internet and mobile data services across the province — except in Quetta — from Nov 10 to 16, citing security threats and the prevailing law and order situation.

Home Department officials confirmed that the suspension order and a security alert had been issued. "The internet service will remain suspended in the rural areas of the entire province," they said, adding that Quetta district would remain exempted from the restriction. However, residents complained that many parts of provincial capital were also facing signal disruptions, making it difficult to access internet and mobile data services.

Meanwhile, all educational institutions in the Cantonment area remained closed on Wednesday. The officials said that schools and colleges in the Quetta Garrison would stay closed from Nov 12 to 16, citing security reasons. Government schools in the city, however, remained open, though some were found closed.

Transport services

The provincial government has also suspended all transport services, including taxis and private vehicles, on the Loralai section of the National Highway (N-70) until Nov 14, citing security concerns and law and order considerations.

However, the ban will not apply to local or intra-city traffic, allowing residents to travel for daily needs within their areas.

The home department has directed all district administrations, police and relevant authorities to ensure immediate implementation of the decision and make alternative arrangements for the public's convenience.

Meth worth Rs900m seized from D.I. Khan bus

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Customs has thwarted a smuggling attempt, seizing 15.2kg of crystal methamphetamine worth Rs910 million from a passenger bus in Dera Ismail Khan.

According to an FBR statement, the Customs Enforcement team intercepted a large quantity of foreign-origin narcotics from a passenger bus during a routine check at IP-JCP Aman Mela, D.I. Khan, recovering crystal methamphetamine concealed inside three specially designed inverters placed in the bus. The driver and conductor were arrested on the spot, and an FIR was lodged against them.

The recovered narcotics included 15 packets of meth valuing Rs910.2m.

As the narcotics were being transported from IP-JCP Aman Mela to the State Warehouse, the Customs staff came under attack by unidentified armed man, who opened indiscriminate fire on the Customs convoy. However, the swift response from the Customs team ensured the safety of both personnel and the seized goods —Mubarak Zeb Khan

Remand of cases to lower courts not routine: SC

• Justice Shah says remand is a judicial tool to be used only when justice demands • Court sets aside service tribunal's ruling granting advance increments to railway officer

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that remanding a case back to a lower forum for its determination afresh is a judicial instrument, to be employed only when justice demands so.

"To remand case is not a matter of routine or an automatic judicial reflex," observed senior puisne judge Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah.

A two-judge SC bench, headed by Justice Shah, had taken up an appeal filed by the secretary/chairman of Pakistan Railways (PR) challenging the Oct 26, 2022, decision of the Federal Service Tribunal (FST), Lahore, which had granted relief to respondent Tariq Mansoor, the accounts officer at PR's audit department.

The case concerns Tariq Mansoor, who while serving in Pakistan Railways, obtained an LLB degree in 1992 and later applied for two advance increments under two schemes: (i) the Incentive Scheme for Railways Officers and Subordinates of Jan 22, 1966, and (ii) the Grant of Advance Increments to the Employees Drawing Pay in BPS-16 — Office Memorandum of July 8, 1996.

The respondent had approached the department through a representation, which was referred to the Finance Department and later rejected on Sept 26, 2019, on the grounds that the 1966 scheme stood abolished. The FST, however, accepted his plea.

The Supreme Court held that no benefit under the 1966 scheme could be extended to officers of the audit department, and that the LLB qualification was not recognised under the 1996 general scheme. Therefore, the respondent's case did not fall within the scope of either scheme. The benefit extended by the FST under the 1966 scheme was declared unsustainable and set aside, Justice Shah observed.

The court considered whether to remand the matter to the tribunal but concluded that there was no justification for remand, holding that the respondent was not entitled to advance increments under either of the schemes.

Justice Shah explained that a case should be remanded to a lower forum only where material facts remain undetermined, procedural fairness has been compromised, or essential evidence has not been duly examined — situations in which the appellate court cannot itself do complete justice.

"The purpose of remand is corrective, not dilatory; it serves to secure a just adjudication, not to prolong litigation," Justice Shah observed, adding that the power to remand must be exercised with circumspection and restraint.

He noted that where the factual matrix is complete, the issues are purely legal, or the appellate record permits a final determination, the appellate court should decide the matter itself. "To remand in such circumstances is to sacrifice substance to delay justice in the name of process."

The judge observed that restraint against unnecessary remand is rooted in the principle of judicial economy — a foundational tenet of modern adjudication that obliges courts to avoid duplication of proceedings, promote finality and conserve judicial time.

It also embodies the constitutional command for expeditious justice under Article 37(d) of the Constitution, ensuring that litigation does not get trapped in repetitive procedural rounds.

Referring to the argument that the LLB degree was equivalent to an MA degree and therefore entitled to benefit under the 1996 general scheme, the court noted that no such facility for treating equivalent degrees was provided in the scheme, nor could such a condition be judicially read into it.

"Institutional autonomy is a vital facet of constitutional governance. It reflects the recognition that each organ or department of the state possesses its own sphere of competence, expertise, and discretion within which it must be permitted to function freely," Justice Shah observed.

He emphasised that while courts are the ultimate interpreters of legality, they must exercise judicial restraint in matters where the law vests policy discretion or administrative choice in an executive or institutional authority.

"When a scheme or departmental policy — such as one framed by Pakistan Railways or the Finance Division — does not expressly provide for a particular benefit, it is not the function of the court to read that benefit into the scheme. Doing so would amount to judicial legislation and would erode the institutional autonomy that underpins administrative efficacy."

The court also noted that following the impugned judgement of the FST, the respondent had already received advance increments amounting to Rs75,000.

The additional secretary of Pakistan Railways informed the court that in view of the circumstances, the department did not intend to recover the amount from the respondent.

The petitions were converted into appeals and allowed.

Inter-provincial wheat seed flow becomes smooth, govt claims

Punjab govt told to expedite seed dispatches to Balochistan, Sindh to meet critical sowing timelines

By Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research claimed on Wednesday that the inter-provincial flow of wheat seed — particularly during the critical sowing window for Rabi season in Sindh and Balochistan — has now become uninterrupted and smooth, and provincial governments have expressed their satisfaction over the supply of wheat seed.

In a statement, the ministry said the timely and coordinated interventions led by secretary of National Food Security, Amir Mohyuddin, and the strict enforcement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) by the provincial agricultural departments, the seed movement issue which erupted on October 29, has now been resolved amicably.

The ministry while receiving complaints regarding delays in inter-provincial movement of wheat seed and wheat flour, held two review meetings with provincial agricultural departments, price control and commodity management department of Punjab and the national seeds development and regulatory authority, and it was agreed that all provinces would follow and enforce SOPs for inter-provincial seed movement using verified convoy notes.

To streamline monitoring, the ministry has issued directives for immediate deployment of representatives from the Federal Seed Organisation (FSO), the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD), and relevant provincial departments at key exit and entry points to oversee verification and on-site issue resolution.

The Punjab government was specifically instructed to expedite seed dispatches to Balochistan and Sindh to meet critical sowing timelines and avoid production losses.

From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reports indicated a major bottleneck at Ramak check post, where around 100 seed trucks enroute from Punjab were stranded. Similar delays were also observed at other checkpoints along the inter-provincial borders, affecting timely delivery of certified wheat seed to farmers.

The Punjab government was specifically asked to coordinate for immediate clearance of over 100 stranded seed trucks at Ramak and adjacent checkpoints.

Taking immediate measures, the ministry directed KP food and agriculture departments to coordinate directly with their counterparts in Punjab to ensure instant clearance of all seed consignments upon verification of convoy notes. The Punjab government agreed to facilitate and expedite seed dispatches to meet Balochistan's sowing requirements within the stipulated timeline.

Additionally, joint inspections to check hoarding and fake seed by FSC&RD and provincial teams continued, while flour movement nationwide was to be facilitated to ensure smooth supply and prevent artificial inflation of wheat and flour prices, the ministry statement said.

The Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department and National Seed Authority (NSA) cautioned that some fake seed consignments were being transported under the guise of wheat seed and flour shipments. The ministry took serious notice of this and instructed strict screening of all consignments to prevent counterfeit seed circulation.

It was decided to deploy focal persons at all key check posts to resolve verification issues on the spot. To facilitate uninterrupted transport, all trucks with valid documentation were to be cleared within 1 to 2 hours, while the consignments without the convoy notes to be returned to their origin for correction.

Each province was directed to submit daily data on wheat seed and flour movement to the federal ministry for centralised monitoring, while the ministry committed to issuing weekly progress reports and holding coordination meetings every week to track implementation.

Officials from Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa acknowledged that despite significant progress, delays were still occurring at several inter-provincial check posts. These bottlenecks were primarily related to verification processes and incomplete documentation of seed consignments.

In Sindh, the seed requirement was estimated at 3.7 million metric tons, but only 19,800 metric tons had been moved by October 29. This disparity between demand and actual seed inflow was noted with concern, and Sindh authorities were asked to work closely with the seed providers and federal government agencies to close the gap.

The secretary of agriculture, Balochistan, reported a shortfall in certified seed supply against the province's target of 500,000 hectares, requiring 50,000 bags per day. As of October 29, only 12,000 to13,000 bags were being received daily. This slow inflow risked delaying the sowing schedule in several districts and was flagged as a priority concern.

Printed at Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt) Ltd by Khalil Mohsin and published for Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt) Ltd by Shahjahan at Haroon House, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed Road, Karachi. EDITOR: ZAFFAR ABBAS